Written submission from Katherine Lesslar (ANI0642)

1) DEVOLUTION
I am completely amazed that of all the issues another jurisdiction wishes to get involved with in Northern Ireland is abortion. This is a devolved issue and I don't believe that anyone in the Women and Equalities Committee represents a seat here. You all may not agree with the opinion of people in Northern Ireland but it really is something that we need to decide on and agree on ourselves here. I do not recall that there was such interest in anything else that ever happened here in Northern Ireland in relation to women. Where is your voice in relation to other women's issues. We must be allowed to make our own decisions. Surely it is disingenuous to interfere in what is a devolved matter.

2) DISTINCTIVE LAW AND CULTURE
We have a very greater sense of community here. We do not have the same culture as in other parts of the UK. I still believe that life begins with conception and that a person should have some rights to be acknowledged for their personhood and if a decision has to be made to take that life that it is done within the limits of some legislation. Why have so many people elsewhere lost their lives. It is quite clear that 100,000 people are alive today who otherwise would not have been if we had adapted the 1967 Abortion Act. People here with Downs Syndrome have a chance to live. Why is it that you want to change something that we celebrate and feel positive about in the lives that have been saved.

3) HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY
When a baby is conceived there are three people to consider. The mother, the baby and the father. Why when women are asking for equality they have decided that the father has absolutely no rights. The baby is also part of the father. I heard a programme last year about fathers expressing how devastated they were when their partners decided to have abortions and one father said each year on that anniversary he felt quite low. Has any thought been given to those men who would be responsible fathers. On the flip side it is a great excuse for those fathers who wish to abrogate any responsibility. As a society we are saying to them to not worry it is all to do with the woman and her body so don't worry you have no input here at all in terms of a baby or responsibility. Equality must give men some rights as well. Then in relation to the baby. I have four children and all of them are the one and only person only they could be and they were that person from the time an egg and sperm came together. The unborn baby is a person and has to have some rights otherwise what have we become as a society. It also feeds into a society which does not see life in its fullness from when it begins and is willing to discard those who are not convenient or who do not fit as in having a disability or some defect. Where does that all end. Has anyone in the Women and Equalities Committee actually gone and done a thorough investigation into what is happening in relation to abortion in England Scotland and Wales as you would do if making a major decision on any aspect of law. It is worrying when terminology such as reproductive rights becomes the terminology as it is sanitising what really happens. Legislation which is compliant with the wishes of the people in Northern Ireland is needed but that means we must be able to look at this devolved subject ourselves. Perhaps it would be more beneficial to look at the relationship of Amnesty International and George Soros. Women need proper services here as well Please fight for better perinatal mental health, for women who are being abused or in violent relationships, for women who are homeless and need to get accommodation and a fresh start in life, for elderly women who are lonely or need proper health and social care, for refugee and migrant women, for women who have got caught in sex trafficking, for women who are disabled for the right to get work or purposeful days, for women living on the margins of society, for those who have low educational attainment. Please tell me why you aren't fighting for these things here, What has been the motivation to pick one thing. What has been pushing you. Who has been pushing you. What are the motives?
4) PERSONAL STORIES

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